

COMMUNION

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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COMMUNION

Background Reading: Mark 14:22-24

The celebration of communion is an extremely important aspect of Christian worship. This study will focus on the purpose of communion, what it represents, the requirements for partaking of communion and the benefits it provides. Before He ascended into heaven, the Lord gave the Church two New Covenant ordinances - communion and water baptism. And it must be understood that these are not to be voluntary additions or accessories to the Christian life. They are both commanded by the Lord and important for our ongoing spiritual growth.

A covenant is a solemn and binding agreement between two or more parties in which each makes certain promises to perform certain duties in regard to the other. This agreement is a commitment which is meant to last, regardless of whether problems arise or circumstances change.

A blood covenant was set in place by the shedding of blood, whether this was human blood or the blood of an animal. This was a sign of commitment to the pact, and demonstrated the solemnness of the agreement. In some cultures, the parties concerned would cut their fingers or wrists and let their blood flow and mingle, signifying that they had become, in one sense, of one blood. This demonstrated their commitment and was a solemn pledge to honour the terms of the agreement even if it meant endangering or losing their own lives.

After the Fall of Adam, and in Old Testament times, whenever God set in place a Covenant with anyone, it was always done through the shedding of the blood of animals. One of the reasons this was done is because blood signifies life - indeed scripture tells us that the life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11a).

The sacrificial offering of animals throughout the Old Covenant was a type-pattern of what was to come - for Jesus became God's sacrificial Lamb, slain to take away the sins of the world and to establish our Covenant of Redemption. This was what Jesus was

referring to in Matthew 26:28 when He said, “*This is My Blood of the New Testament (Covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*” Jesus used the wine as a representation of His shed Blood and the biscuit as a representation of His broken Body. By the shedding of His Blood, Jesus established the Covenant of Redemption - for all who would enter into that Covenant.

“. . .It is also important to realize that Jesus’ Blood was shed intentionally and purposefully, and that this was no accident or mistake. . .”

Everything in both Old and New Testaments points to the perfect Lamb of God, His finished work on the Cross of Calvary, and the Resurrection which makes it possible for His finished work to become a reality in our lives.

Through Jesus’ sacrifice and the shedding of His Blood, God’s plan of redemption was completed and set in force forever. This Covenant demonstrated God’s great love for us and His pledge to honour and fulfill His promises to us. Our part in this Covenant is the circumcision of our hearts which occurs when we make Jesus our Lord and we repent. This brings us into complete union with the Father, spiritually, and so we become covenantal partners with Christ whereby we cry “*Abba Father*” (Romans 8:14-17).

COMMUNION IS A TIME OF CELEBRATION

The night Jesus was to be betrayed, being the true Passover Lamb of God, He celebrated the Passover with His Disciples in what is now known as the Last Supper. During this meal He gave direction concerning what the meal was to represent, both for them and for all the generations of Christians to follow.

LUKE 22:15 And He (Jesus) said unto them, “With

desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you (it would be symbolic of the New Covenant) before I suffer (instituted through His suffering on the cross):”

MATTHEW 26:26 *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it (the bread is a symbol of His Body broken at Calvary), and gave it to the Disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is (represents) My Body.”*

MATTHEW 26:27 *And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink it all of you (the cup is a symbol of His shed Blood at Calvary);*

MATTHEW 26:28 *For this is (represents) My (the) Blood of the New Testament (Covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*

Jesus took the bread and the wine that night and established the format for communion, the love feast which He commanded the Disciples to continue to observe.

“. . .So when we come to the communion table, we are celebrating our communion with the Lord and our bonded relationship with our fellow Believers through the Blood of Jesus. . .”

Communion is a time of celebration - a time where we can celebrate the victory Christ won for us. Through Jesus’ death and Resurrection, He conquered all that hell had to offer, and established the way to freedom for all who choose to follow Him. Jesus paid the redemptive price needed to release mankind from death. Indeed He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly, for He said:

JOHN 10:10 . . . “I (Jesus) am come that they (all who believe) might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (life to the full).”

REVELATION 1:8 “I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending,” says the Lord, “Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come, the Almighty.”

REVELATION 1:18 “I am He Who lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (the keys to release men from spiritual death).”

Not only did Christ release us from sin’s hold in a legal sense, but that which gives us the power to sin, i.e. the sin nature, has been legally dethroned. To replace this power source, a new nature, the Divine Nature, has been imparted to us so that we may partake of its graces - its power. Through the Divine Nature we now have power, when we yield to the Holy Spirit, to live the saved life at an experiential level. This means we can live victoriously, and in doing so, please the Father.

At salvation, the sin nature is cleansed from our spirit so that it becomes clean, and thus blameless in Christ. The soul (mind), however, needs to be renewed so that our thinking lines up with God’s thinking. As different areas of our minds are renewed in the truth of God’s Word, we become sanctified at a conditional level. This describes the work of ongoing sanctification. The message is this: as we stand in a spiritual sense before the Cross, let us never forget the finished work of Calvary. This includes not only the positional state of righteousness into which Christ has brought us, but the conditional state of righteousness we can attain (or experience), area by area, to match our position. This is possible if we keep our focus on the Cross of Calvary and Christ’s finished work on our behalf whereby all sin has been defeated. This includes the sin nature which remains with us. It is defeated as we yield to the Spirit and receive the empowerment we need to subdue it and walk in victory through the energies and graces of the Divine Nature.

“. . .Not only did Christ release us from sin’s hold in a legal sense, but that which gives us the power to sin, i.e. the sin nature, has been legally dethroned. . .”

We celebrate Christ’s victory at the Cross on our behalf through remembering, at communion, the Lord’s broken Body and shed Blood. It is a time of thankfulness, praise and worship - for our eternal future in heaven has been bought and paid for by Jesus’ death and Resurrection. This celebration is variously called, in Christian circles, “the Lord’s Supper,” “the Communion Table,” “the Eucharist” or simply “Communion.”

A MAIN FOCUS POINT OF CHURCH ON SUNDAYS

As Bible-believing Christians and members of the Body of Christ, we come together on Sundays to magnify and praise our God and our Saviour.

One of the main focus points each Sunday should be the communion table where we bring into remembrance the great sacrifice that was made on our behalf. It is a time when we proclaim the death and Resurrection of our Lord. We do this by bringing into remembrance the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus. In so doing, we proclaim that the only way we are able to be saved (spirit, soul and body) is through the punishment He bore for us and the shedding of His precious Blood. By celebrating communion on a regular basis, we are keeping at the forefront of our minds the reality and power of our Covenant with God.

Through communion, we as a corporate body are able to testify to God, ourselves, the world and the devil that Jesus died and was raised again, and is alive forevermore (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23 . . . the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:24 *And when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, “Take, eat: this is My Body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of Me.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 11:25 *After the same manner also He took the cup, when (after) He had supped, saying, “This cup is (represents) the New Testament in My Blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26 *For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are representing and signifying and proclaiming the fact of the Lord’s death until He comes [again]. (Amp.)*

JESUS’ DEATH

Background Reading: Isaiah 53:6-11

God’s will was for Jesus’ Blood to be shed so that fallen man could be redeemed. Jesus submitted to His Father’s will wholeheartedly, and underwent the suffering of death.

Psalms 22 gives a graphic account of what Jesus experienced as He was dying on the cross. Indeed the crucifixion scene was even more vividly portrayed by the Psalmist writing a thousand years prior to its occurrence than by the Gospel writers who actually witnessed it:

PSALM 22:1 *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? (Jesus uttered this cry from the cross: Matthew 27:46)*

PSALM 22:7 *All they who see Me laugh Me to scorn (mock Me); they shoot out the lip (hurl insults), they shake the head saying (on the cross He was laughed at*

and mocked by His own people: Matthew 27:39-43),

PSALM 22:8 He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him (God) deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him. (The religious leaders spoke these actual words in derision at the cross: Matthew 27:43)

PSALM 22:11 Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. (The Disciples had forsaken Him and fled: Matthew 26:56. There was indeed, “none to help.”)

PSALM 22:12 Many bulls have compassed Me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. (“Bulls” represent the demonically inspired, religious leaders who sought to kill Jesus: Matthew 27:1-26; John 11:47-53; Acts 2:36)

PSALM 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint (the result of the torture of crucifixion): **My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels.** (Jesus died of a ruptured heart: John 19:34)

PSALM 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd (Jesus was weakened through physical and emotional torment); **and My tongue cleaves to My jaws** (loss of blood causes great thirst); **and You have brought Me into the dust of death.** (Death would come to Jesus at the cross: John 19:30)

PSALM 22:16 For dogs have compassed (surrounded) **Me** (the “dogs” are the Roman soldiers); **the assembly of the wicked have enclosed** (encircled) **Me** (the religious leaders - the Scribes, Priests and Pharisees), **they have pierced My hands and My feet** (nailed Him to the cross).

PSALM 22:17 I may tell (can count) **all My bones** (no

bone in Jesus' Body was broken: Psalm 34:20; John 19:36); they look and stare upon Me.

PSALM 22:18 *They part (divide) My garments among them and cast lots upon (for) My vesture. (The Roman soldiers cast lots for His clothing: Matthew 27:35; John 19:24)*

This Psalm is a memorial to the suffering and heartbreak of Jesus. It begins with the words Jesus was to speak on the cross, and through this cry we become aware of His anguish as He sensed the Father's presence withdrawing from Him for the first time. Verses 14-18 of the Psalm portray the physical suffering of Jesus. Crucifixion literally resulted in the bones being pulled out of their sockets. He was weak through physical torment and in terrible thirst. Even the piercing of Jesus' hands and feet is recorded in this Psalm which was written approximately 250 years before the introduction of crucifixion as a method of execution.

We can see that Jesus' body would have undergone extreme physical stress, not only from the pain He experienced while on the cross, but from the beatings He had endured prior to it. However incredible stress would also have arisen from the emotional torment suffered by this innocent man during the whole period. Luke 22:44 attests to His great agony of spirit and shows what can happen physically to someone under such severe emotional pressure. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus sweated great drops of blood as He agonized in prayer.

Furthermore, Pilate was actually surprised to hear from the Roman centurion that Jesus had died on the cross so quickly (Mark 15:44). This may have occurred partly because of the intense emotional pressure that Jesus had been under. At this time, knowing it was His time to die, Jesus proclaimed the words "*It is finished*" (John 19:30), committed His spirit to the Father's care (Luke 23:46) and breathed His last. These words were hugely significant, for they proclaimed that the sacrifice for mankind's redemption had been completed - no further sacrifice would ever be needed.

So events leading up to Jesus' death show an innocent man betrayed, beaten and crucified, becoming, through this process, the Sin-Bearer for the whole world.

Note: Only after Jesus laid down His life could He then die, for this was His prerogative and His alone (John 10:17-18).

“. . .So events leading up to Jesus' death show an innocent man betrayed, beaten and crucified, becoming, through this process, the Sin-Bearer for the whole world. . .”

The extreme mental as well as physical stress obviously played a part in His death. However, taking account of known medical facts and on examination of the scriptures, one can come to the conclusion that Jesus died, only after voluntarily laying down His life, as a result of a broken or ruptured heart. In other words, after Jesus cried out with a loud voice *“It is finished,”* He bowed His head (John 19:30; Matthew 27:50), and He yielded up His spirit. At this point His heart would have ruptured, and He died, not by the hands of the Romans, but by His own volition - *“I lay down My life . . . No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself”* (John 10:17-18) - according to the Father's purpose.

The detailed account in Psalms of the crucifixion approximately a thousand years before it came to pass demonstrates the divine plan of redemption being set in place by our Heavenly Father according to His foreknowledge of man's fall, before the foundation of the world: Revelation 3:8.

THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF JESUS' SACRIFICE

Jesus displayed the love of God to the world as He submitted to the Father's will in the terrible punishment and death He endured.

The Word tells us that God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were yet sinners and enemies of God, Christ laid down His life and died for us (Romans 5:6-8).

“. . . We could conclude that Jesus died, after laying down His life, of a broken (ruptured) heart through internal haemorrhaging . . . in this His precious Blood was shed, the Blood which paid the price for our forgiveness. . .”

Because Jesus had power over His own life, to lay it down or not, His death was not of human design or manufacture. Rather, it was all part of God’s Divine plan. Jesus stated during this trying time that He could have called on more than twelve legions of angels to deliver Him (Matthew 26:53-54). Instead He chose to endure the ordeal in obedience to the Father. And His attitude towards the people who nailed Him to the cross was “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus often spoke to His Disciples of the sufferings He would endure and how the Son of Man (referring to Himself) would be betrayed and condemned to death.

MATTHEW 20:18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death,

MATTHEW 20:19 And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles (the Romans) to mock, and to scourge (whip), and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again.

Jesus also often stated it was for this very reason that He came into the world. He knew the suffering that He would experience, revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit. Yet He trusted the Father, and submitted Himself to the Father's will - His Divine plan.

THE BROKEN BODY

Background Reading: Matthew 20:17-19

Scripture tells us that Jesus was physically beaten to such an extent that when He was hanging on the cross, we would not, if we had lived at that time and place, have been able to recognize who He was. This was foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

ISAIAH 52:13 Behold, My servant (Jesus) shall deal prudently (act wisely), He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

ISAIAH 52:14 As many were astonished at You; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men: (In these passages, Isaiah seems to sit at the foot of the Cross of Calvary; he views the Redeemer as He hung upon the accursed tree, after He had been buffeted, crowned with thorns, smitten, scourged, and crucified, when His Face was covered with bruises and gore, His Frame and Features distorted with agony : E.S.B.)

Another version reads:

ISAIAH 52:14 Just as there were many who were appalled at Him (You) - His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness (N.I.V.)

ISAIAH 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised (not

being the type of Messiah they wanted), and we esteemed Him not.

ISAIAH 53:4 *Surely He (Jesus) has borne our griefs (sickness and disease), and carried our sorrows: yet we did (ignorantly) esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted (Israel assumed He was “smitten of God,” and, in a sense, He was. He suffered in our stead, actually as our Substitute, which means that the blow that should have come to us instead went to Him. But yet, it was not for His sins, because He had none, but instead was for our sins. He was “afflicted” for us. As stated, He was our Substitute : E.S.B.).*

ISAIAH 53:5 *But He was wounded for our transgressions (rebellion), He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace (the punishment needed to bring us peace) was upon Him (and Him alone); and with His stripes (wounds) we are healed (and made whole).*

ISAIAH 53:7 *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted (refers to all that He experienced in His suffering), yet He opened not His mouth (did not try to defend Himself) . . .*

Everything written ahead of time concerning the Messiah was supremely fulfilled in Jesus. He was rejected and despised, whipped, beaten and humiliated. Jesus suffered this punishment on our behalf so we could have victory in every area of our lives, as we allow Him to be Lord of every area of our lives. The punishment He bore was necessary for the purpose of the Atonement. We can now have our minds renewed in the truth of Christ's finished work at the Cross, which includes healing for our bodies and freedom from every torment of the mind. Such was the love of our Father for us.

“ . . .Everything written ahead of time concerning the Messiah was supremely fulfilled in Jesus. . .”

Also, let us not forget that Jesus broke sin’s deathly grip on our lives. Our ledger of sin has been nailed to the Cross, with the words “paid in full” stamped on it. The sin nature has been washed out of our spirit where it resided, leaving our spirit clean and free from every pollution of darkness. The “old man” (the old unregenerate self) is therefore dead and gone, and we have been released from the domination of the sin nature. The result is that we are now free to serve God, not sin (Romans 6:6).

This is made possible as we yield to the Holy Spirit and receive empowerment through the Divine Nature, enthroned in our hearts through Divine connection. In this way we are given the means to overcome sin in our daily lives, for as we know, the sin nature remains with us, commissioned or de commissioned, until we leave this life. Therefore the sin nature still needs to be defeated in the life of the Christian. This takes place as we, partaking of God’s Divine Nature, are given graces to have not only a holy desire, but also the empowerment to do God’s will. Through the graces of the Divine Nature, we gain the power to say “Yes” to God and “No” to sin. As we do this, the sin nature will not have ascendancy, but will continue to be dethroned. Amen.

When a person was to be flogged in this way they were bent over and tied to a post. A Roman soldier then applied blow after blow to the prisoner’s bare back. The whip used was a lash intertwined with pieces of bone and metal so that as it struck the victim’s back, it would tear the flesh, causing deep lacerations. This in itself was sometimes sufficient to cause death.

Although completely unjust, Jesus’ suffering and death constituted the Sacrifice of Atonement which took place so that mankind could be made whole, spirit, soul and body (Hebrews 13:12). Therefore both His suffering and death together make up the Sacrifice of Atonement - that has set free all those who believe and

trust in Christ and His redemptive work. The Atonement itself was then brought to completion by the Resurrection.

In the context of the Atonement, Christ's finished work on our behalf, we can now understand that the stripes which Jesus received paid the price for our healing (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24). These stripes, as well as being part of the punishment meant for us, were also part of the suffering side of the Atonement. He suffered so that we might be healed.

“. . . Although completely unjust, Jesus' suffering and death constituted the Sacrifice of Atonement which took place so that mankind could be made whole, spirit, soul and body. . .”

As Jesus maintained His faith during this whole trial, He remained sinless, so being proven worthy to be the Lamb of God - to take away sin and its consequences (John 1:29).

The high cost of bringing redemption to mankind was revealed through Jesus' death on the cross. God the Father gave of His very best when He gave of His Son to die. There could have been no greater gift, no greater price paid. Such was the love of God, displayed for us through Jesus.

THE SHED BLOOD

Background Reading: Hebrews 9:16-22

Jesus stated in Matthew 26:28:

MATTHEW 26:28 “. . . this is My Blood of the New Testament (Covenant), which is shed for many for the remission (forgiveness) of sins.”

When Jesus made this statement in Matthew 26:28, the Disciples would not have understood what He was talking about. They did not know that His death was imminent, and they did not know that the shedding of His Blood would usher in the New Covenant.

As we look back in hindsight, however, we can see that Jesus was using the wine in the cup as a symbol for His shed Blood, through which the New Covenant, the Covenant of Redemption, would be established.

It is also important to realize that Jesus' Blood was shed intentionally and purposefully, and that this was no accident or mistake. Indeed scripture tells us that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness.

HEBREWS 9:22 And almost all things are by the Law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (no forgiveness of sins).

Another version reads:

HEB 9:22 [In fact], under the Law almost everything is purified by means of blood, and without the shedding of blood there is neither release from sin and its guilt nor the remission of the due and merited punishment for sins. (Amp.)

What a glorious inheritance, and a wonderful covenant we have in Christ our Lord - the sinless Lamb of God Who gave His life and shed His blood on our behalf! By the grace of God we are redeemed and freed from the ravages of sin and eternal death. And it is the blood which speaks forth redemption's power - the blood which speaks forth redemption's grace. Through the blood we are cleansed and delivered, for there is wonderful power in the blood.

REV 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

WE WERE BOUGHT WITH A GREAT PRICE

Background Reading: Hebrews 2:9-18

Through Jesus' act of dying on the cross, He legally paid the price for all mankind to be redeemed. This then becomes a reality in the lives of those who make Him Lord and Saviour. First Corinthians 6:19-20 and Acts 20:28 tell us:

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19 *What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you, Whom you have (received) of (from) God, and you are not your own?*

1 CORINTHIANS 6:20 *For you are bought with a price (Jesus' shed Blood): therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (belong to Him).*

This means that through Jesus Christ and therefore Divine connection, God remains forever our Father (unless through mortal sin we break the connection). We become His possession in a relational way, and function both as His sons and daughters, and His servants. Therefore, as His treasured possession, we should live not for ourselves but for He Who died for us and bought us with the price of His shed Blood (2 Corinthians 5:15).

ACTS 20:28 *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the (of) which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (here Paul is speaking to a group of Pastors), to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own Blood.*

"purchased with His own Blood"

"to purchase" = "to buy"

Jesus legally purchased us with His shed Blood from the slave market of death. The word “purchase” signifies ownership.

Through accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we have allowed God to surround our spirit with His saving presence and we have become His treasured possession. Having been washed in the Blood of the Lamb, we have legally and therefore positionally received Christ’s righteousness - and we are precious to the Father. We could say that each one of us is God’s own unique possession. Indeed we are all God’s beloved children.

“ . . . Jesus legally purchased us with His shed Blood from the slave market of death. The word “purchase” signifies ownership. . . ”

We should therefore be thankful for God’s wonderful work of grace in our lives, grace which we read about in the Book of Colossians:

COLOSSIANS 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, Who has made us meet (qualified and fit) to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light:

COLOSSIANS 1:13 Who has delivered (rescued) us (all who have received Jesus as Lord) from the power (authority) of darkness (spiritual death), and has (past tense) translated (placed) us into the Kingdom of His dear Son:

COLOSSIANS 1:14 In Whom we have redemption through His Blood (this was the price paid), even the forgiveness of sins (at the Cross, the Lord broke the power of sin, and took away its guilt [Romans 6:6] : E.S.B.)

Through His grace we become partakers of a new nature, the Divine Nature, which provides us with the power to live experientially in victory - as we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit.

2 PETER 1:3 *According as His Divine power has given unto us all things (everything we need) that pertain to life and godliness (to live a Godly life), through the knowledge of Him Who has called us to glory and virtue:*

2 PETER 1:4 *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises (relates to God's Word): that by these (promises) you might be partakers of the Divine Nature (given to all at salvation), having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (speaks of ongoing sanctification by this means).*

As we realize and understand the Lord's great love for us, the only fitting response we can make is to commit ourselves totally to His service. Indeed to lay our lives down daily so that we may do that which pleases the Father, not ourselves, is our "reasonable service."

ROMANS 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy (by the power of God), acceptable unto God (because of the Cross), which is your reasonable (spiritual) service.*

ROMANS 12:2 *And be not conformed to this world (and its ways): but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind (so that you begin to think spiritually, not naturally), that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (presents that which the Holy Spirit is attempting to bring about within our lives). (E.S.B.)*

As we renew our minds and begin to think as God thinks, we will understand the will of God and, by His power, walk in it.

THE RESURRECTION

Background Reading: John 20:1-18

The Resurrection of Christ is the most phenomenal event to have taken place in human history, and to the Believer, is a source of hope beyond compare.

Many times throughout the Gospels, Jesus spoke to His Disciples about what was to happen to Him - how He must suffer and die, and after three days be raised from the dead, e.g. Matthew 20:19. However, even His Disciples who walked with Him for approximately three and a half years did not comprehend what Jesus was telling them. They seemed to have no understanding that He would die, and certainly no expectation that following His death, He would be resurrected (Luke 24:11). One reason for this was that the Disciples were unregenerated. They had no faith to understand or comprehend in any way what Jesus told them, which was so far from their own thinking. They needed spiritual regeneration to understand spiritual truth, as does every man and woman today (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

We could well imagine how Satan and his forces of wickedness would have been rejoicing that they had crucified the promised Messiah and thwarted God's plans. What a shock would have run through the caverns of hell and the Kingdom of Darkness on that Sunday morning when the power of God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated all that hell and death had been able to hurl at Him.

The sign which confirmed that Jesus was from God and everything He said and did was of God, came when the power of God raised Him from the dead. This mighty physical sign proved that the way to eternal life had indeed been made, and that everything Jesus had said was true (John 14:6).

“. . .The Resurrection of Christ is the most phenomenal event to have taken place in human history, and to the Believer, is a source of hope beyond compare. . .”

BASIC ELEMENTS OF COMMUNION

Jesus gave us a commandment concerning communion that we as Christians should obey until He comes again for us. In Luke Ch.22 we find:

LUKE 22:19 And He (Jesus) took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, “This is (represents) My Body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.”

LUKE 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is (represents) the New Testament (Covenant) in My Blood, which is (will be) shed for you.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show (proclaim) the Lord’s death until He comes (again).

Significantly, one important aspect of communion is that it is a memorial feast - a love feast in memory of our Saviour’s finished work at Calvary. Here sin was conquered, death was defeated, and man gained the opportunity to be born again. The Believer then walks in “*newness of life*” through becoming a partaker of the Divine Nature - through which, as he yields to the Holy Spirit, he is given the power to walk in righteousness. When we walk in righteousness, doing God’s will, the energies and graces of the Divine Nature are absorbed at an experiential level by our human nature. The human nature is then energized, and through this we

gain the mind of Christ and the passion of Christ, being at one with Him in that area in which we are yielding (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5). Amen.

“ . . . Through Jesus’ sacrifice and the shedding of His Blood, God’s plan of redemption was completed and set in force forever. This Covenant demonstrated God’s great love for us and His pledge to honour and fulfill His promises to us. . . ”

When we as Christians come together, we remember, through obeying this commandment, the sacrifice that was made for us - the sacrifice of Jesus’ Body and His shed Blood.

To represent or symbolize Jesus’ Body, just as He did at the Last Supper, Christians normally use a piece of broken bread or biscuit.

When we partake of the piece of biscuit, we are bringing into remembrance Jesus’ beaten and bruised Body. The punishment Jesus endured at this time was needed in order for us to have healing, perfect peace of mind and prosperity in every area of our lives while we are here on earth - as, of course, we follow the leading of the Spirit.

ISAIAH 53:4 Surely He (Jesus) has borne our griefs (sickness, weakness and disease), and carried our sorrows: yet we did (ignorantly) esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

ISAIAH 53:5 But He was wounded for our transgressions (rebellion), He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace (punishment that brought us peace) was upon Him (and Him alone); and with His stripes (wounds) we are healed (and made

whole).

To represent Jesus' shed Blood, Christians normally use a red liquid in a small cup.

When we partake of the cup, we are bringing into remembrance that it is only through Jesus' shed Blood that we are able to be washed clean of all sin, and so reunited with our Heavenly Father.

The communion emblems, the bread and red liquid, are not to be taken as the actual Body and Blood of Christ. They are only representations or symbols of His beaten and bruised Body and shed Blood.

We are, however, to continue to remember the Lord and His finished work on the Cross through these emblems, as He has commanded us to do, until He returns.

THE CONDITIONS FOR PARTAKING

There are two major requirements for participating in the Lord's Supper. Firstly the participant must be regenerated (born again) by God's grace and secondly, living a life that is correspondent to a commitment to Christ's Lordship.

Paul gave instructions regarding the celebration of communion in his first letter to the Corinthian Church. He was addressing a Christian assembly where severe excesses were taking place in this and other areas, and where the people needed to be strongly reprimanded. At Corinth, a fellowship meal was eaten by the Believers and this was followed by the solemn rite of communion. However the Corinthians appeared to be making no distinction between communion and the common meal. We can also perceive through reading 1 Corinthians Ch.11 that drunkenness, gluttony, selfishness and greediness were commonplace and that the holy purpose of communion was being trodden underfoot and profaned.

“ . . . There are two major requirements for participating in the Lord’s Supper: firstly the participant must be regenerated - secondly, living a life that is correspondent to a commitment to Christ’s Lordship. . . ”

Thus Paul reminded the people of the poignant scene where the Lord handed down the institution of the Lord’s Supper, on the very night in which He was to be betrayed. Paul reminded the Corinthian Church and he reminds us today through the authority of the scriptures that the Lord commanded us to *“do this . . . in remembrance of Me.”* And he brings us back to the bread and the wine, the Body and the Blood of Christ, as the true basis for this solemn meal.

After admonishing the Corinthian Church and then reminding them of the seriousness of the matters he was speaking about, Paul went on to give instruction concerning the responsibilities of the individual in regard to communion. We can apply these principles to our lives today.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:27 So then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a way that is unworthy [of Him] will be guilty of (profaning and sinning against) the Body and Blood of the Lord. (Amp.)

1 CORINTHIANS 11:28 Let a man [thoroughly] examine himself, and [only] when he has done so should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (Amp.)

1 CORINTHIANS 11:29 For any one who eats and drinks without discriminating and recognizing with due appreciation that [it is Christ’s] body, eats and drinks a sentence - a verdict of judgement - upon himself. (Amp.)

1 CORINTHIANS 11:30 That [careless and unworthy participation] is the reason many of you are weak and sickly, and quite enough of you are fallen into the sleep of death. (Amp.)

1 CORINTHIANS 11:31 For if we searchingly examined ourselves - detecting our shortcomings and recognizing our own condition - we should not be judged and penalty decreed [by the divine judgement]. (Amp.)

Paul “**pulled no punches**” in delivering this message to the Corinthians. He was telling them that they would bring judgement upon themselves if they participated in the Lord’s Supper unworthily.

What are these scriptures telling us today? They are telling us that those who partake of the Lord’s Supper are to ensure that they are worthy to do so. Indeed we will be treating the whole communion celebration with disrespect if we come unworthily. As we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we are entering the presence of the Lord in a special way, and sin (hatred, resentment, unforgiveness etc.) will block us from fellowshiping with Him in the way He would desire us to do.

“ . . . He was telling them that they would bring judgement upon themselves if they participated in the Lord’s Supper unworthily. . . ”

In Old Testament times, the high priests had to be ceremonially cleansed of sin before they entered the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, even though His presence was only there in a limited way (for no-one could look upon the face of God and live: Exodus 33:20). If they did not specifically follow the ordinances which were

required to make them ceremonially clean, when they entered the presence of God they would die immediately. Jewish tradition tells us that this was why the High Priest had bells on his ceremonial dress (Exodus 28:33-35). If the bells fell silent while the Priest was officiating in the Holy of Holies, the other priests would assume that he had entered unworthily and had died. They could then retrieve his body by a rope which was attached to his waist, for only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies on that Day of Atonement.

The same principle of entering the presence of God unworthily applies to communion today, for we too need to be clean before the Lord through repentance and the Blood of Jesus. When we take communion we are, in a similar way, spiritually entering the presence of God at this special level. If there is sin in our lives when we take communion (e.g. unforgiveness or hatred, etc.), then we are trying to enter into His presence stained with that sin. This will hinder our fellowship with the Lord at this special time, and may even result in us eating and drinking judgement upon ourselves, which will allow bondage into our lives (as occurred with some of the Believers in the Corinthian Church).

***“ . . .As we partake of the Lord’s Supper,
we are entering the presence of the Lord
in a special way, and sin will block us
from fellowshiping with Him in the way
He would desire us to do . . .”***

We should therefore examine ourselves to see whether or not we have sin in our lives before we take part in communion. If we do discover that we have sin in our lives, we should repent according to 1 John 1:9:

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess (and repent of) our sins, He (the Lord) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confess and repent of your sin, then thank the Lord for the cleansing from all unrighteousness (the result of that sin). We should do this before we come to church, but if we forget, then it can be done at church before we partake of communion.

Remember, if we are to receive the blessings communion offers, we need to be living in obedience, refraining from deliberate sin and desiring a more intimate fellowship with Christ as we come to the Communion Table. We need also to come before the Lord with a humble spirit, knowing that “*God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble*” (James 4:6).

We are to be a holy people, even as our Lord is holy, and to approach communion in a worthy manner. When we come worthily to the communion table, we avoid giving the enemy legal ground to attack us. The Lord would also have us participate fully in His Supper and not be hindered in any way from joining with Him and enjoying the pleasure of His fellowship at this time on a corporate level, with fellow Believers.

We need to prepare ourselves before the service so that our vertical fellowship with God is ongoing and vital. In other words we should spend time with God on a daily basis, worshipping Him and allowing Him to speak to us. Sometimes He may show us that we need to change areas of our lives. At other times He may simply share His love with us. Whatever God and His sons and daughters do in these times, however, will help develop the vertical fellowship that exists between He and His children.

“. . . We need to prepare ourselves before the service so that our vertical fellowship with God is ongoing and vital. . .”

We gain a legal positional relationship with the Father upon salvation, but then we need also to fellowship daily with our Heavenly Father in order to develop this relationship and expand our fellowship. This will help us when we come to the communion table

as a corporate group of Believers. Then we will be in a position to join together with other Believers in “*the faith*” as one in love and truth. This is called **the unity of the Spirit**. When our vertical fellowship with God is right, this will help in promoting our horizontal fellowship with one another in the Spirit. This unity will then command a blessing:

PSALM 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (There are two types of unity: the man-made variety, and that which can only be given by God, which will always have the Cross as its foundation) (E.S.B.)

PSALM 133:3 . . . for there the Lord commanded (and still commands) the blessing, even life for evermore.

This blessing will mean that there is an Anointing on the service. The principle of holy unity applies to communion, holy unity which commands a blessing that brings pleasure to God and His family. So we can see why it is so important to have this unity in our corporate meetings. We do need to remember, however, that before this horizontal unity can be realized, our vertical fellowship with our God must be sound and unbroken.

Armed with this understanding of the Atonement, we are identifying ourselves with Christ, not only in His death but also in His Resurrection. When Jesus was raised from the dead, He broke the power of sin and everything associated with it (Colossians 2:15). This includes anything that would keep man in bondage, including all sickness and disease. Amen. Indeed when Jesus said, “*It is finished*,” sin was defeated. Therefore we are no longer under any obligation to obey sin or the sin nature, but instead should reckon ourselves to be “*dead indeed unto sin*” :

ROMANS 6:11 Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ROMANS 6:12 *Let not sin (the sin nature) therefore reign (rule, gain the upper hand) in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof (ungodly lusts of the flesh).*

ROMANS 6:13 *Neither yield your members (parts of your mortal body) as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (the sin nature): but yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead (raised in “newness of life”), and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (through the energies and graces of the Divine Nature).*

ROMANS 6:14 *For sin (the sin nature) shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law (trying to please God in your own strength), but under grace (God’s grace is abundantly available to us as we yield and believe for it).*

Again, if we are discerning (understanding) the Body and Blood correctly (1 Corinthians 11:28-29), we will be identifying with Christ in all that He went through, knowing that as joint heirs with Him, we too have been legally set free from the power of sin, sickness and disease. He has paid the price, and we are raised up in victory with Him through His Resurrection into “*newness of life*.”

“ . . . Armed with this understanding of the Atonement, we are identifying ourselves with Christ, not only in His death but also in His Resurrection. . . ”

Of course to take advantage of our legal position, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to educate our spirit through the renewing of the mind so that God can empower us, strengthen us and even heal

us, if needed. Therefore every time we take communion, we should discern the Body and Blood of Christ in this light, knowing that we have been legally set free from every sin, every bondage and every disease through Christ's broken Body and shed Blood.

If we do not properly discern the Body and Blood, then yes, some may remain sick, become sick or even die prematurely. If we do not properly understand the meaning of the Blood of Christ, the devil will run rampant in our life - for only through the Blood can we be forgiven, cleansed and protected. And when we come to communion, if we have committed transgressions, we need to put them under the Blood if we are to fully identify with Christ.

At communion, we can focus our faith on all it represents, we can come to a position where we may be better able to appropriate healing, if needed. Participating in communion can enable us to narrow our focus whereby we can identify not only with Christ's death, but also His resurrection with its subsequent power over sin, death and even all forms of sickness and disease.

We who are in Christ, are legally identified with Him. Thus, in a legal sense, when He died, we died. When He went to hell, we went to hell. When He rose up from the dead, we also rose with Him and are now seated with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). This is our legal position, and included in this is our legal identification with Christ's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Sometimes communion can give opportunity for those who have been struggling to appropriate the promises of God, to gain healing through this identification - for at the resurrection, Jesus won the victory for us in every area of our lives, spirit, soul and body. Here He gained power over sin, death, sickness and disease. Legally this victory is ours too, and we can know it in an experiential sense, if needed, as we focus our faith on His broken body and shed blood, and identify ourselves with Him. Sin and sickness had no power over Jesus as He rose up, triumphant, from the grave. We too can know healing for our bodies as we partake of the emblems, focusing our faith on Christ's total victory over all the power of the enemy.

Communion also represents a time when Believers gather together in the unity of the Spirit to participate in and identify with

the body and blood of Christ. Because of this corporate unity, there can be a greater anointing (Psalm 133:1-3). Potentially, under this anointing, Believers may be better able to exercise their faith, and so appropriate healing through the promises of God. Thus communion represents a time when there is opportunity for those who have not been able to appropriate healing, to do so, through identifying with Christ's total victory, under an increased (corporate) anointing. This means we can rise with Him, knowing healing for our bodies, as we identify with His glorious resurrection victory and focus our faith on it.

So do not let communion become a religious ritual! When we come around the communion table, we should come with reverence, remembering Whose presence we are in. We should prepare ourselves, repenting of known and unknown sin, so that we may participate fully in the service, and not eat and drink judgement upon ourselves. And we should remember that we are one with Christ, and thus are identified with the victory He won for us, body, soul and spirit. Amen and amen..

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

REVIEW OF TEACHING BOOKLET

Fill in the blanks

1. The two New Testament ordinances, and, are both commanded by God and necessary for our spiritual

2. At the Last Supper, Jesus took and, and established the pattern for

3. We celebrate the Christ won for us through His broken and shed at communion.

4. When we celebrate communion, we proclaim the and of our Lord, and keep this in the forefront of our minds: 1 Cor.11:26.

5. Psalm 22, written years before the, presents a more graphic account of Jesus' suffering than that which is found in the

6. This Psalm shows forth God's divine plan of for mankind, for it was God's that Jesus die for the of the world: John 3:16.

7. Jesus gave up His life, and displayed God's to the world when He died on the

8. The wounds (.....) Jesus received paid the price for our and of mind: Isa.53:4, 5.

9. Jesus suffering on the, and the results of Him

being severely physically, were all prophesied hundreds of years beforehand by the prophet

10. The high cost of bringing to mankind was shown through Jesus' on the Cross.

11. Jesus used the in the cup as a symbol of His own blood, which, when it was shed, would establish the New between God and man: Matt.26:27, 28.

12. Jesus' had to be shed, for without the shedding of blood there can be no of sin: Heb.9:22.

13. By His own blood, Jesus has purchased or bought back from the authority of, all who receive Him as: Col.1:13.

14. It was the of Christ which confirmed He was from, and proved that the way to heaven had been made: John 14:6.

15. The communion emblems, which are the and liquid, represent (or symbolize) the and of Christ.

16. In 1 Cor.11:27-30 we find that people who were eating and drinking at communion in an manner were bringing judgement upon themselves - for this reason some were and some had even

17. This tells us we should ourselves and repent of any in our lives before we take part in communion: 1 Cor.11:28, 31.

18. As we celebrate communion, our fellowship with God needs to be sound and unbroken, and our fellowship with fellow Believers also needs

to be right.

19. When we are in with one another (and the Lord), then it is here that He will command a which is His corporate on our services: Psa. 133:1, 3.

20. Jesus, at the, gained total victory over sin, death, and, and legally this victory is also.

21. We can therefore appropriate during the communion service by focusing our on Jesus' victory, and with Him in it.

22. So do not let communion become a ritual, for it is a time we can come in a special way into the Lord's and be blessed accordingly as we identify with the He has won for us in every area, body soul and spirit.

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to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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